

TCS - 10/17/62

1. It is generally agreed that Soviet MRBM's -- offensive weapons -- are now in Cuba. While only one complex of three sites and no nuclear warheads have been spotted, it must be assumed that this is the beginning of a larger build-up.

2. It is generally agreed that these missiles, even when fully operational, do not significantly alter the balance of power -- i.e., they do not significantly increase the potential megatonnage capable of being unleashed on American soil, even after a surprise American nuclear strike. The Soviet purpose in making this move is not understood -- whether it is for purposes of diversion, harassment, provocation or bargaining.

3. Nevertheless it is generally agreed that the United States cannot tolerate the known presence of offensive nuclear weapons in a country 90 miles from our shore, if our courage and our commitments are ever to be believed by either allies or adversaries. Reports from either our European allies or the Soviets that we can become as accustomed as they to accepting the nearby presence of MRBM's have some logic but little weight in this situation.

4. It is also agreed that certain of our NATO allies would be notified but not consulted immediately prior to any action by the United States; that certain Latin nations would at least be notified; and that, if there is to be military action, the President would hold announcing the existence of the missiles and the justification of our action until after that action had been completed.

5. The following possible tracks or courses of action have each been considered. Each has obvious diplomatic and military disadvantages, but none others as yet occur.

Track A - Political action, pressure and warning, followed by a military strike if satisfaction is not received.

Track B - A military strike without prior warning, pressure or action, accompanied by messages making clear the limited nature of this action.

Track C - Political action, pressure and warning, followed by a total naval blockade, under the authority of the Rio Pact and either a Congressional Declaration of War on Cuba or the Cuban Resolution of the 87th Congress.

Track D - Full-scale invasion, to "take Cuba away from Castro".

Obviously any one of these could lead to one of the others -- but each represents a distinguishable approach to the problem.

6. Within Tracks A and C, the political actions, pressures and warnings could include one or more of the following:

(a) Letter to Khrushchev

- Stating if ever offensive bases exist, they will be struck; or
- Warning that we know they exist, and must be dismantled or they will be struck; or
- Summoning him to a Summit, offering to withdraw our MRBM's from Turkey, etc.

(b) Letter to Castro

- Warning him of action if bases not dismantled; and/or
- Seeking to separate him from Soviets on grounds that they are willing to see him destroyed

- (c) Take this threat to the peace before the UN, requesting inspection team, etc.
- (d) Take this threat to the Hemisphere to the OAS and obtain authorization for action

7. Within Tracks A and B, the most likely military alternatives aside from blockade and invasion include the following:

- (a) A 50 sortie, 1 swoop air strike limited to the missile complex, followed by open surveillance and announcement that future missile sites would be similarly struck.
- (b) Broadened air strikes to eliminate all Cuban air power or other retaliatory capacity, up to 200 sortie (one day's activities).
- (c) Not yet considered: Commando raid, under air cover, by helicopter or otherwise, to take out missiles with bullets, destroy launches, and leave.
- (d) Note: It is generally agreed that we must also be prepared to take further action to protect Guantanamo, from which dependents will have to be evacuated in advance.

8. Other questions or points of disagreement

- (a) Whether Soviet reaction would be more intense to Tracks A, B, C or D
- (b) Whether Moscow would be either able or willing to prevent Soviet missile commanders from firing on United States when attacked, or Castro and/or his Air Force or any part of it attacking U.S. mainland. This includes the further question of whether, if a military strike is to take place, it must take place before these missiles become operational in the next 2 weeks or so.
- (c) Whether Soviets would make, or threaten in response to any note, an equivalent attack on U.S. missiles in Turkey or Italy -- or attack Berlin or somewhere else -- or confine themselves to stirring up UN and world opinion.
- (d) What our response would be to such a Soviet attack -- or a Soviet defiance of blockade -- and what their response would be to our response
- (e) Whether Castro would risk total destruction by sending planes to U.S. mainland -- or be able to control all his planes
- (f) Whether any Congressmen should be consulted, whether war need be declared, whether the President should cancel all remaining speeches

- (g) Whether NATO allies should be briefed at highest level by high-level spokesman
- (h) Fate of the 1100 prisoners under any alternative
- (i) Whether it would be helpful to obtain a public (UN) and private (Gromyko) denial
- (j) To what extent any advance notice -- through political notes or pressure, etc. -- makes more difficult the military's task, if in the meantime
 - the missiles are concealed; or
 - the missiles become operational
- (k) Whether, if missiles are taken out, the Soviets would bring in additional missiles -- or, if aware of continued surveillance, would find "their bayonets had struck steel instead of mesh" and therefore desist
- (l) Whether reservists call-up, National Emergency, or Declaration of War by a reconvened Congress are necessary
- (m) How successful we would be in justifying to world military action against Cuba
- (n) Whether the effect on our allies would be worse if we do strike or if we do not